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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000485

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SUBJECT: KOFI ANNAN'S VISIT TO DRC CONTINUES INTERNATIONAL
CALLS FOR PEACEFUL ELECTIONS

REF: A. KINSHASA 467

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 460

[1](#)C. KINSHASA 393

Classified By: PolOff KBel, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Continuing to promote the international theme of a steady march toward peaceful elections and conflict-free governmental transition, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan completed his two-day trip to Kinshasa and left for Kisangani the morning of March 23. During his meetings with DRC president Kabila and the four vice presidents, as well as his meeting with the president of the electoral commission and members of civil society, Annan emphasized the international community's support of elections in which all Congolese should participate "without conditions." End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Kofi Annan's trip comes on the heels of visits by UN Undersecretary General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guehenno, as well as visits by the heads of three UN agencies (reftels), and underscores the UN's support of the Congolese and the DRC's upcoming elections. Annan noted that electoral rules have been established, regulations and laws have been put in place, and that "everybody should have the right to participate without conditions... and everybody must respect the rules of the game and respect the results."

[1](#)3. (U) Annan also welcomed reports that the EU will form a rapid-response peacekeeping force during the election period. He noted that the international community has done all it can to ensure peaceful elections, and that managing the election process itself is now up to the Congolese. While acknowledging the logistical difficulties, Mr. Annan urged the Congolese people to take advantage of this "historic opportunity to choose their destiny" and make the electoral process work in spite of inevitable technical problems.

[1](#)4. (C) In a closed March 22 meeting with the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT), Annan urged the member Ambassadors to seek a maximum degree of election "inclusivity". In this regard, Annan noted he had met privately both with DRC Vice President Ruberwa, who has been threatening to suspend his participation, and opposition figure, UDPS President Tshisekedi. Annan opined that internal Congolese negotiations were underway that appeared promising to avert Ruberwa's withdrawal. Annan acknowledged Tshisekedi, however, as being more "complicated." Annan also

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expressed his fear that the announced election timetable leading to a first-round June 18 election date can not be maintained. Should delay become inevitable, clearly undesirable as that would be, he said it would be better to

ensure a comprehensive review and announce a delay only once of what ever duration is required, rather than undergo a series of smaller delays that could undermine popular support for the process. Finally, he also urged continuing CIAT action to try to forestall the transition government disintegrating too quickly, noting the need for fundamental government operations to continue. Already, however, the transition government structure, always tenuous at best, looked to be coming apart.

15. (C) Various Ambassadors weighed in, generally concurring with Annan's message, but raising other points as well. The British Ambassador underscored the importance of political leaders maintaining acceptable electoral campaign conduct. Ambassador Meece observed that all the major existing parties have major internal divisions, raising the possibility of one or all essentially disintegrating as viable structures, creating further uncertainties about DRC's post-election political future. As well, security concerns remain a foremost threat, arising from both armed groups in the east, as well as inadequately paid, trained, and integrated Congolese armed forces. The French Ambassador noted that there are now appears to be a "regional consensus" favoring stability, meaning the governments of Uganda and Rwanda seem to support Congo moving toward elections. He also noted another problem of possible IMF and Bank essential suspension of funding due to problems associated with both programs, potentially resulting in a major funding shortage precisely around election time, when uncertainties and tensions would be most pronounced. The Congo-Brazzaville Ambassador pointed out that the DRC justice system is "not credible," a particular concern in terms of resolving inevitable post-election challenges. Annan took note of the various concerns. He advised that CIAT Ambassadors could anticipate receiving some UN proposals on how election challenges might be handled, as well as thoughts on how to promote elections inclusivity. In addition, Annan appealed to donors to

KINSHASA 00000485 002 OF 002

consider undertaking new efforts to help train Congolese national election observers, and as well noted briefings that the current election budget would likely need to be increased.

16. (C) Comment: Annan's public statement usefully reinforced themes of the need to move toward elections in accordance within the established agreements, and hopefully established timelines. While calling for all to be involved in the process, to the clear dismay of UDPS militants, he conspicuously did not endorse Tshisekedi's demands for various actions, all of which would mean further election delays. As the most senior-ranking and highest-profile of the recent series of VIP visitors, the Annan visit served as a useful capstone to underscore international interest in and support for the election process. End comment.

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